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U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

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ROBERT L. SIMMONS, II, STAFF DIRECTOR

May 14, 2013

The Honorable Chuck Hagel  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As you know, this Committee remains deeply concerned about the terrorist attacks in Benghazi, Libya on September 11, 2012 that resulted in the deaths of four Americans. In the past months, through two classified Member briefings, several staff briefings, and in evaluating classified and unclassified written material received from the Department, the Committee has examined closely the Department's preparation and response to these attacks.

While much of the information conveyed has enabled the Committee to understand better the circumstances of the events, several important questions about the Department's actions remain. Therefore, as we prepare the Fiscal Year 2014 National Defense Authorization Act for the Committee's consideration in early June, I have directed the Oversight and Investigations subcommittee to convene two or more transcribed Member briefings between May 21-23 in order to receive information:

1. from the commanding officer of the Site Security Team about the actions of his team, his recommendations to higher authority, the orders he received from higher authority, and related issues;
2. from appropriate official(s) more senior than the Site Security Team's commanding officer about the orders issued to the Site Security Team, the reason for these orders, and related issues;
3. on the distribution of manned aircraft in the region, the length of time in which they could be armed, the length of time for them to be dispatched (armed or unarmed) to Benghazi, estimated flight time, any requirement for in-flight refueling, extent to which (and on what authority) any dispatch with or without armament and/or refueling arrangements was contemplated or rejected, and related issues;
4. on the distribution of unmanned aircraft in the region, the possibility that they could be armed and the length of time for this to take place, the extent to which (and on what authority) any dispatch with armament was contemplated or rejected, the data collected

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- by the two unmanned aircraft which were dispatched and to what organizations and/or commands that data was contemporaneously distributed, and related issues;
5. on the posture and distribution of the U.S. European Command's Commander's In-Extremis Force, the length of time for the positioning and dispatch of this force, any complications which may have delayed this positioning and dispatch, and related issues;
  6. on the posture and distribution of any Marine Corps FAST teams in the region, the length of time for the positioning and dispatch of these teams, any complications which may have delayed this positioning and dispatch, and related issues;
  7. on the force protection and operational posture assumed by U.S. military units in the region in 2012 in anticipation of the anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, any orders or instructions from higher authority mandating this posture, the origins of any such orders, the comparative force protection and operational posture assumed by U.S. military units in the region in 2005-2011 preceding the anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, and related issues.

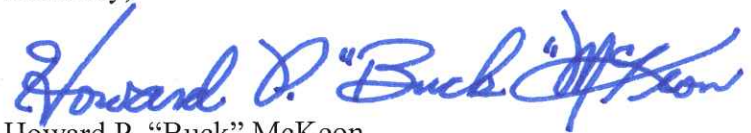
In conjunction with these briefings, I also reiterate the request for the classified Department timeline for September 11-12 that I made to you in my letter of April 17.

I ask that the above-noted briefings occur at the UNCLASSIFIED level, although arrangements will be made to receive classified information as necessary.

I am certain you share the Committee's desire to address thoroughly, authoritatively, and conclusively these and other matters related to the Benghazi attacks. Departmental representatives can make arrangements for these briefings in coordination with Christopher J. Bright, Staff Lead, Oversight and Investigations.

I look forward to continuing to work with you and others in the Department in the coming months as the Committee exercises its oversight responsibilities in connection with the Benghazi attacks.

Sincerely,



Howard P. "Buck" McKeon  
Chairman

cc:  
The Honorable Adam Smith  
The Honorable Niki Tsongas  
The Honorable Martha Roby